

SHELTERING KNOWLEDGE: RESIDENCES OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA AND ITS PRECURSORS, 1838 TO 2021

by Eric Ratcliff

(with eleven plates)

Ratcliff, E. 2021(15:xii): Sheltering knowledge: residences of the Royal Society of Tasmania and its precursors, 1838 to 2021. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 155(2): 97–110. ISSN 0080-4703. Albion House, 153 & 155 George Street, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia. Email: eric.ratcliff.albion@gmail.com

The Royal Society of Tasmania and its precursors have met and stored their collections in at least eight different buildings in Hobart and several in Launceston since Sir John and Lady Franklin started a scientific society in 1838. Those built for the specific purpose of housing collections initiated by the societies remain as important components of the built heritage of Tasmania. The choices of style and architect made by the Royal Society for its Tasmanian Museum contributed directly to, and through influence on, the character of the historic city centre of Hobart.

Key Words: museums, libraries, botanical gardens, colonial architecture, Royal Society of Tasmania.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Society of Tasmania (RST) founded in 1843 under the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Eardley-Wilmot, and gaining the royal prefix the following year when Queen Victoria agreed to become its Patron, inherited the aims and objects of several earlier associations as well as part of their collections. The Society and its precursors have met and stored their collections and libraries in at least eight different places in Hobart and four in Launceston during the past 180 years, and these buildings have contributed both directly and by influence to the built heritage of Tasmania. This paper provides a brief account of the principal sites occupied by a succession of associations dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in Tasmania.

LADY FRANKLIN'S TASMANIAN MUSEUM

In 1838, Lady Franklin wrote to her sister in London from Government House in Hobart Town: 'We are about forming a small private scientific society to meet here once a fortnight, & to have a museum' (Franklin 1838, pp. 223–225). A meeting of the society in August 1840 resolved that 'specimens illustrative of every paper read and published should be deposited in the museum, and that duplicate specimens should be sent to England'. At first, it was probably convenient to store the specimens at Government House, but it was soon realised that the safe keeping of a growing collection would require a custodian and dedicated spaces for their storage and display.

Lady Franklin had acquired a block of bushland in the foothills of Mount Wellington that she intended to keep for its natural flora and fauna. With the aid of a symposium of members of the scientific society and some classical dictionaries, she named her property *Ancanthe*, understood

to mean 'vale of flowers' (Franklin 1838, pp. 223–225). Whenever she visited it, she would pass the scene described by her stepdaughter, Eleanor Franklin: 'a wooden cottage with some pillars in front, which is a very pretty object from the road, having the Mountains in the background' (Franklin 1842, p. 196). In 1838, Lady Franklin 'out of her private income' purchased the ten-acre block that included the cottage and asked the botanist Ronald Campbell Gunn to establish there 'a Collection of our indigenous Plants – a thing most urgently wanted' (Gunn letter to Sir William Hooker 15 February 1838 in Burns & Skemp 1961, p. 71). Lady Franklin decided that as the government under her husband, Sir John Franklin, was not in a position to provide a museum, she would build her own there.

The choice of a Grecian design appears to have had multiple origins. It may be that a feature of the cottage, probably the one shown near the museum in both John Skinner Prout's and Loetitia Casey's wash drawings of about 1843, contributed a suggestion towards the style of the museum (Casey 1843, Prout 1844). The property had been given a Greek name, and the proposed museum was also spoken of as a *glyptothek*. Strictly, that word embodies the combining form denoting carving or engraving on gemstones, so its original meaning was closer to a jewel-box than a building, but by extension, it came to mean a repository for carvings, a keeping place for sculptures (Webster's Dictionary 1948: *glyptotheca*). As part of Lady Franklin's plan to uplift the cultural life of the colony, it was intended that the museum should contain not only specimens from the natural world, but also works of art, including a selection of casts from the 'Elgin Marbles'. There is no evidence that the casts ever arrived in this colony, although the University of Sydney did acquire some at an early time in its history.

The phase of Neoclassicism in England now known as the Greek Revival was at its height when young Jane

Griffin became involved in the cultural life of London. The building of the British Museum designed by Sir Robert Smirke, a *chef d'oeuvre* of Grecian style, had begun in 1825, and she would have been very much aware of the Elgin Marbles and probably went to see them either in Lord Elgin's shed, where they had been made accessible to artists and cognoscenti at least since 1811, or, after they had been purchased for the nation at one of their subsequent locations, before her departure for Van Diemen's Land as Lady Franklin in 1837.

She had a lively interest in architecture, and, judging from a shopping list of books she sought from her sister in London in 1840, her tastes embraced the smorgasbord of fashions available in the stylistic period now known as the Regency (Franklin 1840). The Franklins showed no particular preference for one style over another; Sir John's projected secondary college at New Norfolk was intended to be Grecian, but the new Government House was begun in 1842 to a Tudor Gothic design devised by the former convict architect, James Blackburn (Blackburn 1840).

It seems clear, however, that Lady Franklin wanted a Neoclassical museum, for in 1841 she wrote to her sister asking her to obtain a design from Sir Francis Chantrey (Franklin 1841), the celebrated portrait sculptor whose habit was to render his sitters in Roman garb. Anything he recommended was going to be either Grecian or Roman. It is not known whether the requested design was sent, or whether Lady Franklin was forced to rely entirely on the architectural resources of the colony, which were not inconsiderable. John Lee Archer had been retrenched from the position of Colonial Architect and Engineer by Sir John in 1838, and her nephew, William Porden Kay, did not arrive to take up a recreated position until 1843, but the government drawing office was still manned, mostly by former convicts. Pre-eminent among these was James Blackburn, and it was to him that she turned to build her museum, although, despite his proven abilities, she strongly disapproved of him socially. She found fault with him at least once in the course of the work; she noticed that the pediment was leaning a little, and he is reported to have vowed that she must have climbed on to the roof to discover the error (Woodward 1951).

A simple *tempietto* design to be realised in sandstone was well within Blackburn's capabilities, without assistance from an imported pattern. He was a trained architect and engineer from London who had been convicted of forgery in 1833 and transported for life. In May 1841 he gained a free pardon for his expert services in the Department of Roads and Bridges and the later Department of Public Works. At the time of Lady Franklin's commission, he was nearing the end of his time in government employ and engaged in adding a manneristic Doric *porte-cochère* to the Treasury building in Murray Street. However, the design for that was publicly criticised as being excessive, so it was reduced to a porch (*The Courier* 4 March 1842, p. 3). The late Geoffrey Stilwell speculated that the extra columns thus made redundant may have been used at *Ancanthe* (Stilwell 1971), but that is unlikely to be the case as they were entirely different in dimensions.

The building, comparable in scale to the smaller garden temples built in England since the mid-eighteenth century, is in the form of a prostyle temple, with a portico with four fully detailed Doric columns supporting a simplified entablature and a plain triangular pediment without acroteria (pl. 1). Behind this, the side walls are without windows, but articulated with attenuated antae, piers of Grecian derivation designed to harmonise with columns, but not to imitate them. The interior consists of a gallery, illuminated by skylights, and two small back rooms behind a chimney with an elegant black marble chimney-piece. In his endeavour to give the building the external appearance of a Greek temple, Blackburn created some problems. The pitch of the roof is at an angle of 17°, considerably steeper than that of ancient Greek temples, but about half as steep as the average colonial roof, and impracticably shallow for effective weatherproofing from the covering of split shingles that it originally wore, a problem further exacerbated by the necessary skylights. Consequently, the original ceiling inside has had to be replaced. The chimney-stack was built as low as possible so that it would not be visible from the front, and the fireplace is likely to have smoked profusely.

The frontal columns lack entasis, the slight bulge along the length of the shafts introduced to avoid the optical illusion of concavity, but otherwise they are archaeologically correct in detail, proportion and spacing. The entablature is properly divided into lintel and frieze, but there is no decorative apparatus of triglyphs alternating with metopes in the latter, nor guttae above the former. The most evident non-Grecian feature is the articulation of the walls; in an ancient Greek prostyle temple, antae appear only ahead of the side walls, under the portico, but centuries of Georgian design founded on Roman and Renaissance precedent had made architects incapable of providing a plain ashlar-faced wall without dividing or decorating it in some way.

The building of the Tasmanian museum was well under way by March 1842 and it opened in October of the following year a few weeks before the Franklins left the colony (Boyes 1843, Craig 1961). With their departure impending, they were not confident of the survival of the Tasmanian Society, as their scientific society was now called, so Lady Franklin deeded the *Ancanthe* estate to five trustees: Bishop F.R. Nixon (the first bishop of Tasmania), J.E. Bicheno (the Colonial Secretary), Reverend T.J. Ewing, Reverend J.P. Gell, and the botanist, Ronald Campbell Gunn (Burns & Skemp 1961, p. 72). Hence, the property came into the hands of the Church of England, and in view of its educational intention, was entrusted to Christ College in its first foundation. When the College closed at the end of 1856, the property entered a period of neglect. Some of the collections had been acquired by the RST, and in 1853 the glass cases made to display them were purchased from the trustees of Christ College to use in its new Tasmanian Museum. Some eventually found their way to Launceston, where at least one may still be in use (Piesse 1913, p. 153).

Apart from the architect's drawings, which no longer seem to exist, the earliest image of the museum is probably the etching by Thomas Bock on the souvenir card for the



PLATE 1 – Lady Franklin's Tasmanian Museum, Kangaroo Valley, Hobart, circa 1910 in the form of a prostyle temple, with a portico with four fully detailed Doric columns supporting a simplified entablature and a plain triangular pediment without acroteria. Photo ID: 144585718. Hobart Lenah Valley: collection of postcards by W.J. Little. Libraries Tasmania's Online collection, <https://stors.tas.gov.au/AUTAS0016125397091>

laying of its foundation stone on 16 March 1842 (pl. 2). A letter from Lady Franklin to Captain Ross dated 3 April 1843 made it clear that the card was to be given 'to all present' at the laying of the stone, so it does not appear to be a ticket of admission for the opening day as sometimes stated (Owen 1978). In the same letter, Lady Franklin states that 'I have since had it engraved', but that subsequent image has not been located. The etching is accurate in detail, but slightly increased in vertical scale, and there are three steps forming the crepidoma at the front, and not the six that are still there. The engraving must have been derived from Blackburn's elevation drawing, as it pre-dates the laying of the stone.

If Sir John Franklin's daughter had found the setting picturesque before the museum was built, other artists found it even more so after the little temple appeared in its rough bushland setting. Loetitia Casey made a watercolour drawing of it possibly soon after its completion, from a viewpoint similar to that used by John Skinner Prout in 1844 (Casey 1843, Prout 1844). The two images show the land cleared in front of the building, but no trace of a garden. The Franklins had left Van Diemen's Land in 1843, with the botanist Ronald Campbell Gunn acting as agent for Lady Franklin who continued to own a number of colonial properties other than *Ancanthe*, some at least until 1864 (Burns & Skemp 1961, p. 98). Both images follow the Picturesque fashion of framing the scene with foreground vegetation, and both show the earlier cottage on *Lower Ancanthe* with its four veranda columns on the front. Casey's drawing is less competent but more atmospheric, Prout's more detailed and accurate, and although they

appear so similar, even to a fallen tree-trunk spanning the stream in the foreground, one does not appear to be a copy of the other. In both pictures, the museum looks lenely; its presiding genius had departed.

The little temple lost in the bush attracted the attention of many artists in the ensuing century, even before it was leased to the Art Society of Tasmania in 1948. Either before her move to England in 1888 or after her return in 1922, Lily Allport produced a more lateral view, unusually revealing the long, low chimney stack towards the back in her gardenesque image (Allport undated).

From its simple form, and its multiple associations with Ancient Greece and with the garden temples of 'Augustan' England, the museum was an object in its own right, a focus of the Picturesque. It is difficult to imagine its successors giving rise to so many images.

The building was used for a time as a farm building, at one stage an apple-shed, at another attached to a slaughterhouse. An old photograph shows the building intact, but with a wooden skillion annexed (pl. 3). During its years of eclipse, it was idealised in a famous drawing by the Sydney architect and artist, William Hardy Wilson, reproduced in his *Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania* (Hardy Wilson 1924). His romantic rendering donated a pair of urns under the portico and a selection of antique ruins in the foreground, and corrected the architecture by giving the columns the subtle entasis that they lack, but otherwise it is an accurate image. The tiny, remote, neglected, antipodean building is presented as a *chef-d'oeuvre* of Neoclassicism of a variety at that time yet to be recognised as 'Greek Revival'.

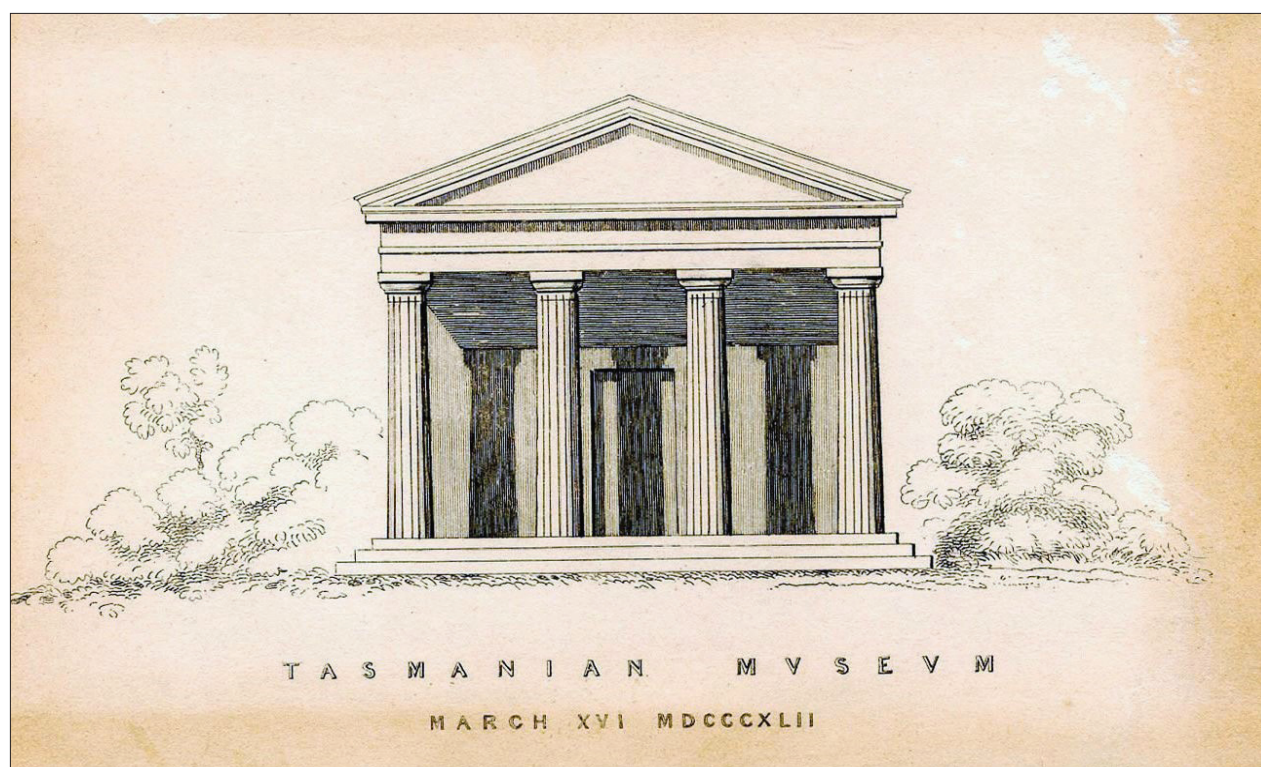


PLATE 2 – Card with engraving by Thomas Bock, given to guests at the laying of the foundation stone of Lady Franklin's *Tasmanian Museum* on 16 March 1842. (Image from Franklin, Jane 1843, *Letter from Lady Franklin to George Washington Walker 25th Oct. 1843 and card with engraving of Ancanthe by Thomas Bock*. University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, Australia. Open Access Repository, W9/A1/11)

An Act of Parliament in 1926 awarded the property to the Hobart City Council and it was later named *Ancanthe Park*. The museum has been leased to the Art Society of Tasmania since 1948 and continues to serve at least one of its historic purposes.

It can be argued that, at *Ancanthe*, Lady Franklin planted seeds that grew into two important institutions that owe their fruition to the Royal Society of Tasmania: the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. In the latter case, her contribution was in the preservation of native flora rather than the exotics that at that time were being acclimatised in the government garden.

HORTICULTURAL INTERLUDE

Lady Franklin's botanical garden at *Ancanthe* did not long outlast her departure, but there was already a government garden near Pavilion Point on the shoreline of the Government Domain, originally set aside for the purpose by Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell in 1818 and developed from 1827 on the orders of his successor, George Arthur. The Governor thought that the climate might require a garden wall heated by flues for the cultivation of fruit as in England; the result, now known as the Arthur Wall, and the Gothick-styled *cottage orné* for the Superintendent of the government garden were both built in 1829 (Hurburgh 1986) (pl. 4A).

In 1843, as an economy measure, Lieutenant-Governor Eardley-Wilmot proposed placing the garden under the management of a newly created Botanical and Horticultural Society of Van Diemen's Land, supported by a diminished government subsidy. This took effect on the first day of 1844, and in September of that year, the Governor announced that the Queen had consented to be Patron; the name of the custodial body became 'The Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land for Horticulture, Botany and the Advancement of Science' (Piesse 1913, Hurburgh 1986, p. 17). Four years later, under Sir William Denison, the Tasmanian Society begun by the Franklins was amalgamated with the more recent foundation, and in 1911 an Act of Parliament formalised the name of the body to be The Royal Society of Tasmania (*Royal Society Act 1911*, <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/2017-10-16/act-1911-047>).

FROM THE BOTANICAL GARDENS TO HARRINGTON STREET

In his attempt to unravel the machinations surrounding the formation of the RST, its early historian, E.L. Piesse, asserted that the Botanical Gardens placed in its care by Sir Eardley Eardley-Wilmot 'absorbed all the energy of the Society' for its first four years, and implied that its meetings were held in the Superintendent's Cottage (Piesse 1913, p. 7 and plate XIV).



10 Lady Franklin's Ancanthe: 'the glory of the time before' (see p. 146).

PLATE 3 – An undated image by an unidentified photographer of Lady Franklin's Museum as a farm building, c. 1900. Photo: Libraries Tasmania collection

In 1845, the RST commissioned the building of another cottage within the Gardens to house their Secretary; it consisted of two rooms and a kitchen (Royal Society Tasmania 1845). This first building for the RST was designed by the Colonial Architect, William Porden Kay, and was given some style in recognition of its prominent position in a garden intended to be ornamental as well as scientific. It cost £126 to build; the Lieutenant-Governor agreed to supply the stone from the government quarry free-of-charge but required the RST to make good any damage to the road resulting from the carting of it (Hurburgh 1986, pp. 21–23). Recently restored, the building still stands near the end of the Arthur Wall and the main entrance gates.

The annual report presented in February 1846 contained a proposal to fit out the cottage as a 'museum and reading room', but this was not proceeded with (Piesse 1913, p. 145). A photograph of the unaltered cottage shows it was obviously too small for such a conversion without very substantial additions (pl. 4B).

From about the time when the activities of the earlier Tasmanian Society faded from view, the RST began to meet and house its collections in rooms pertaining to the Legislative Council at Parliament House. The building had been designed in 1835 in the office of the Colonial Architect, John Lee Archer, as a new Custom House (Tasmanian Archives CSO/804/17189). The design is attributed to Archer, because he was in charge and signed the plans, but a parliamentary history identifies an elusive assistant named McNeilly (Smith 1962, McKay & Pickup 1973).

The Customs Department was to occupy the centrepiece and the south wing, and the north wing towards Murray Street was intended for other government offices, principally that of the Colonial Architect and Engineer, who was to be provided with drawing offices and an 'architectural library and model room' (Tasmanian Archives CSO/804/17189). Archer was retrenched and his position for the time being abolished in 1838, before the completion of the building. In 1840, the Legislative Council took up residence in the Long Room of the Custom House, the beginning of its history as the Tasmanian Parliament House.

The room used by the RST from 1848 to 1852 was the 'large committee room of the Legislative Council', probably the one that had been Archer's intended library and model room (Piesse 1913, p. 153).

The need of both Parliament and the RST for more space led to a search for new premises, and from 1852 the RST leased a mansion at No. 167 Macquarie Street. This was one of a handsome pair of sandstone-faced houses occupying the south-western corner of the intersection of Macquarie and Harrington Streets (Piesse 1913, p. 155). They had been designed in 1847 by Alexander Dawson, an architect employed in the Public Works Department, and their early Victorian style, advanced for its time and unique in the colony, probably reflected his experience in Glasgow, Scotland. His other notable buildings in Tasmania include the former Hobart Town High School, now *Domain House* of the University of Tasmania, the monumental column of the 99th Regiment in Anglesea



PLATE 4 – **A.** The Regency Gothick cottage built for the Superintendent of the Government Garden in 1829 (Plate XIV from Piesse 1913). **B.** The first building commissioned by the Royal Society of Tasmania, a cottage in the Botanical Gardens built in 1845, designed by the Colonial Architect, William Porden Kay with windows in a Williamane Italianate style. It was restored in 1998 and is now called the Friends' Cottage.

Barracks, *Mayfield* in Stoke Street, New Town, *Cananore* in Davey Street, almost certainly *Cawarra* on Risdon Road, and the former St Mary's Hospital at the corner of Davey Street and Salamanca Place. He was to become Colonial Architect in New South Wales, where he designed *inter alia* the Supreme Court Registry and the Observatory in Sydney.

The two houses had been built for the Battery Point shipbuilder George Watson, and the corner house (No. 167 Macquarie Street, but with an imposing entrance on Harrington Street, and later named *Conara*) (pl. 5) had been specifically designed for the residence and school of the owner's son-in-law, Philip Canaway, who opened his 'Tasmanian Academy' there in 1848 (*The Courier* 12 Feb. 1848, p. 2). The adjoining house on Macquarie Street (No. 169, later named *Lalla Rookh*) was where Trukanini (Truganini) lived for nearly two years in the care of the Dandridges, and where she died in 1876. The name of the house was that of the eponymous heroine of Thomas Moore's long poem published in 1817, and had been one of the nicknames, intended to be complimentary, imposed on Trukanini during her lifetime.

Mr Canaway's schoolroom was described in the *Hobart Town Courier* as 'the handsomest room in town', but his Academy was short-lived (*The Courier* 29 March 1848, p. 2). The RST occupied the house less than four years later, and in 1853, purchased from the trustees of Christ College the glass cases and other fittings from Lady Franklin's Museum (Piesse 1913, p. 156). When these had been installed in the handsomest room in town, the Society's museum was

opened to the public for the first time (Piesse 1913, p. 156). There, the museum was visited by Captain Butler Stoney, paymaster of the 99th Regiment of Foot, stationed at Anglesea Barracks, who informed his British readers that it was 'much too small for its increasing collections in natural history and the liberal donations of curiosities which it is constantly receiving', but he regarded it as 'well worthy of a visit from the stranger' (Stoney 1856, pp. 108–109).

Now that their museum was open freely to the public, the RST felt justified in seeking assistance from the Colonial Government to enable it to house its collections, library and its meetings in permanent quarters designed for the purpose. The Tasmanian Government offered to grant the open space of Fitzroy Crescent for a museum and a projected zoo, but nothing eventuated. Other sites were considered, including part of the old gaol site in Murray Street where the Hobart Savings Bank, the first Masonic Hall, and the Derwent and Tamar insurance office were later built, then part of the former Government House grounds, now occupied by the Town Hall, an extension of Elizabeth Street, and Franklin Square. Finally, in 1860, the opposite corner of Macquarie and Argyle streets was given to the RST, and planning soon began on a new Tasmanian Museum, library and meeting room (Piesse 1913, p. 156).

Regrettably, town mansions that did not stand in their own grounds fell out of fashion, and although long used for professional rooms, *Conara* and *Lalla Rookh* fell on relatively hard times. Despite their architectural importance, prominence and great historical interest, and protests from



PLATE 5 – Watercolour by an unknown artist [possibly the architect] of two town houses in Macquarie Street designed by Alexander Dawson and built in 1847. The brown-coloured opening in the painting was an archway giving access to the tradesmen's entrances to both houses. The Society occupied the house on the corner of Harrington Street with an entrance on both façades, later known as *Conara*. Painting donated by Dora Hookey, RST artwork collection

the National Trust, *The Mercury* and opposition within the Hobart City Council, they were demolished in 1965 to give place to one of the least attractive architectural products of that decade, the Four Seasons Hotel, later the Macquarie Motor Inn (Young 1998). Perhaps in the emotional climate of the time, a darker history was against them.

THE TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Having been granted a prominent site for their new building, the RST decided in 1860 to hold an architectural competition for its design. As was usual in the nineteenth century, the entries for the competition were required to be anonymous, although we might wonder how incognito the entrants could have been in the small pool of the Tasmanian and indeed the Australasian architectural profession, even with the addition of enthusiastic amateurs. The premium offered for the winning entry was £30. The successful entrant signed himself as 'Nimrod', and the biblically literate members of the judging panel would have had no difficulty in unmasking the young Henry Hunter.

His entry was in a style described as Italian Renaissance and provided for a two-storey building containing four galleries one above another in each of two wings, a library, a meeting room and offices (pl. 6). The design allowed for the building of two galleries in a first stage, the others to be added when possible. The RST called for tenders to build the first stage, and eight were received (Ward 2006, p. 42).

On 6 August 1861, James Agnew, Morton Allport, Alfred Kennerley, Thomas Giblin, Archdeacon Davies and Dr Edward Bedford on behalf of the RST signed a contract with Seabrook and Son to construct the building for £3772 (Piesse 1913, p. 160, Ward 2006). A building fund attracted 141 subscribers, and the government contributed a substantial sum. Knowledgeable sources are at variance about the proportions of the contributions from the members and the government. Ward states that the government provided one third (Ward 2006, p. 44), while Piesse states that the government 'added £3,000' towards a total cost of 'about £4,800' (Piesse 1913, p. 160). A small additional contract was negotiated to provide six fitted display cases for £35 each and four 'flat' display cases for £11 each (Ward 2006, p. 44). The RST first met in the building on 29 January 1863 (Piesse 1913, p. 160), but its opening to the public awaited rearrangement of the collections.

The *palazzo*-styled building addresses the corner handsomely with three bays on each façade, harmonious but not identical; the plainer side-lighted galleries of seven bays parallel to Macquarie Street are recessed from the street. The public façades are faced with sandstone of two colours; the paler quoins, arches, cornices, parapets and false porch are of stone from Mornington Hill above Bellerive, and the yellower stone of the main wall surfaces came from the Waterworks quarries.

The entrance on Argyle Street was placed in a break front that clearly showed the intention to extend the building on

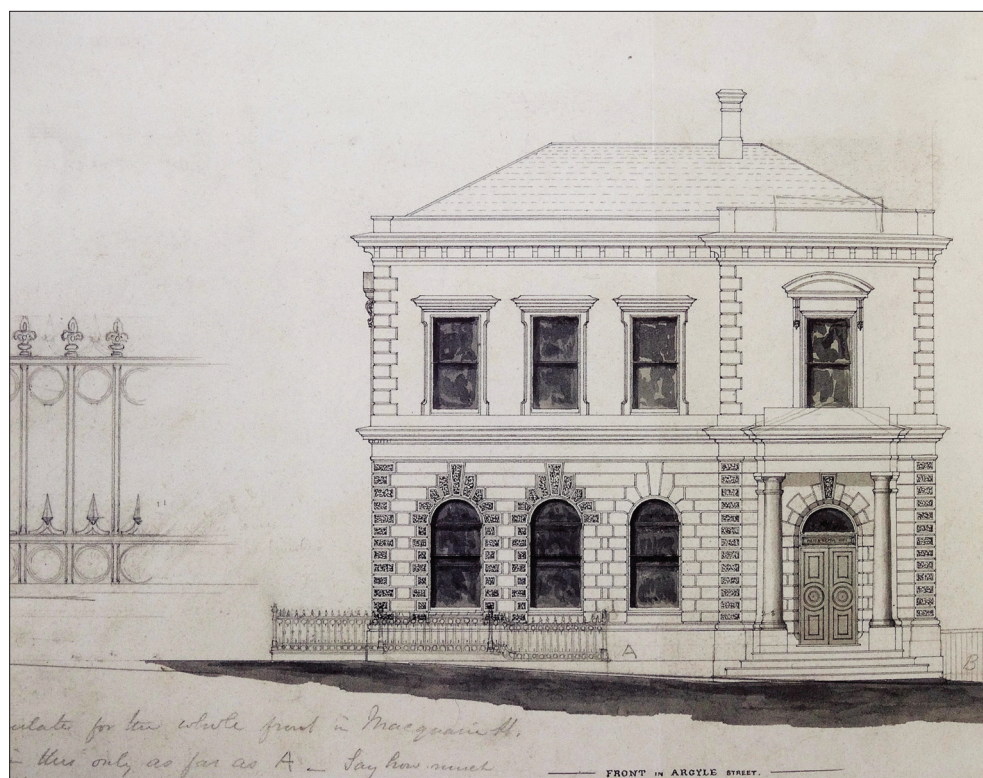


PLATE 6 – Henry Hunter, 'Front in Argyle Street', detail from 'Portion of Royal Society's intended Museum to be built at the corner of Macquarie and Argyle streets', ink, wash and pencil on paper. Note the false perspective created by placing pilasters behind the engaged columns and paralleling the entablature of the false porch. Image: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery R1993.3.912

that side, and the end wall where the addition would have to be made was politely finished and detailed in render in the expectation that there would be a long wait (pl. 7).

The style chosen for the building has been held to have had a direct influence on that of the Hobart Town Hall. Peter Bolger asserted that the influence was in the opposite direction (Bolger 1973), but Barrie Shelton's dating of the respective drawings by Hunter makes the priority clear (Shelton *et al.* 1982). The Municipal Council had announced a competition for the design in 1861, and the winning entrant was Henry Bastow whose design, now lost, is believed to have been in a Gothic style, with an Italianate design by Frederick Thomas placed second. Henry Hunter, strongly under the influence of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hobart, Robert Willson and the Bishop's friend Augustus Pugin, and currently supervising the building of a very Puginian Church of England (All Saints in South Hobart), had entered a project in a Gothic style. According to Barry Shelton, the press and the Aldermen found a Gothic style unacceptable (Shelton 1982). Peter Freeman has discovered that the Council had a mysterious change of mind (Freeman 2016) and this may be explained by the government requiring that as a condition of the grant of land, the style must be compatible with that of the Supreme Court building, then under construction in Macquarie Street to a polite Franco-Italianate design attributed to William Porden Kay, with Frederick Thomas supervising. Whatever the reason for the decision, the museum under construction across the street provided an excellent sample, so in 1862 Hunter was commissioned to provide a design

in a similar style. Hunter gave the RST an elegant box, a receptacle, a keeping place with allusions to Renaissance and Enlightenment and not to medieval obscurantism. The RST choice may have contributed to preventing the gothicisation of an important part of the city. If that had eventuated, it might not have weathered the changes of taste that came with the twentieth century as well as did Hunter's *palazzo* Italianate.

In December 1885, an Act of the Tasmanian Parliament provided that the Society's Museum and Botanical Gardens should be vested in a Board of Trustees, and 'endowed out of the Public Funds', and that:

in consideration of the services provided by the Society in the promotion of science and in the formation, management, and guardianship of the Museum [...], the Society shall have exclusive possession of the Library Room of the Museum, or other sufficient or convenient rooms therein, for the safe custody of their library books and other effects, and for their meetings and for all other purposes connected with the Society.

(Parliament 1885, clause 4, p. 198)

The Act enabled the realisation of Henry Hunter's plans for additions on the Argyle Street side, to provide two more galleries and a basement for storage. The new wing was begun in 1886 under a government contract with the builder William Cheverton with Hunter supervising, but the architect moved to Brisbane in the following year. The contract price was £2550 and the building was completed in 1889, with a façade resembling that on the Macquarie Street galleries (Hunter 1886). Interestingly, although



PLATE 7 – Dr James Agnew laying the foundation stone for the new wing on Argyle Street, 23 December 1886, anonymous photographer, albumen print. Note the rendered detail of the temporary end wall of the original building. Photo: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Q1073

Hunter was working in a style that usually demanded symmetry on the main front, his Gothic experience enable him to compose his Italianate elevations asymmetrically but harmoniously, and few now notice the differences in length and detail on either side of the original entrance.

In 1901, an addition to the end of the Macquarie Street wing, designed by Orlando Baker in the Public Works drawing office, included a top-lit gallery on the upper floor and another gallery on the lower floor that from 1930 became the library and meeting room for the RST. There, the library remained until placed in the care of the University, and there the RST met until it moved into part of the former Custom House on Davey Street opposite the docks, designed by Orlando Baker in 1899 (copies of the drawings held in the National Archives of Australia are displayed within the building, pl.8). That building had been commissioned by the Tasmanian Government on the verge of Federation, and brought forth on a grand scale in the justified expectation that the new Commonwealth would pick up the tab when it was completed in the new century. The building became largely redundant in the late twentieth century, and in 2004 the State Government acquired it from the Commonwealth and annexed it to the Museum and Art Gallery.

So, the RST that had firmly established itself while a tenant in one Custom House, continues to thrive in another, although its quarters, convenient as they are, can no longer be regarded as 'sufficient' as promised in the 1885 Act.

In 1969, the RST library was moved to the Morris Miller Library in the University of Tasmania at Sandy Bay, designed by John Scarborough of Melbourne and built in 1968 as part of a complex of buildings that are architecturally undistinguished.

BEYOND THE CAPITAL

A Northern Branch of the RST was formed in 1853 and met first at the Launceston Public Buildings and then at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute (Ross 2021, pl. 9), both designed by William Henry Clayton, a Tasmanian who became the sole Colonial Architect of New Zealand. The start of a museum collection was first stored at these successive venues, and first displayed at the latter (Petrov 1998) (pl. 10). The Branch had lapsed by 1878 but was decisively re-founded in 1921. Its meetings took place in the 'classroom' of the Launceston Public Library, the former Mechanics' Institute, then in the hands of the Launceston City Council. The classroom was within the library annexe added in 1907 to Clayton's original Mechanics' Institute building on the corner of St John and Paterson streets. The site of those buildings is now occupied by the part of the Civic Square between St John Street and the Launceston Library.

In 1883, the Mayor of Launceston, Alderman Samuel Sutton, called a public meeting to consider his proposal for an 'industrial exhibition' to be held in Launceston. A grant-in-aid was sought, but Parliament refused it by a narrow majority. In 1885, the Municipal Council in Launceston held a plebiscite, as a result of which £4500 was set aside for the building of a permanent public hall as part of the exhibition project (Smith 1893). A renewed request to the government was refused, but in 1886, when the State Government had recently taken over the Tasmanian Museum from the RST and commissioned a new gallery for it, the government offered a consolation prize to Launceston: £5000 to build a museum and art gallery. That offer was taken up with alacrity, and an architectural competition for the design was judged in 1887. The winner was a seventeen-year-old local lad, John Duncan, and his building was opened in 1891. The building is floridly Victorian, with features plagiarised from earlier Launceston buildings, and still forms part of the Queen



PLATE 8 – The former Custom House, Hobart, designed by Orlando Baker and built in 1899–1900, is now part of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and includes the current premises of the Royal Society of Tasmania, occupying the corner office and meeting room on the ground floor at right on Davey Street. Photo: Lynden Leppard



PLATE 9 – The Launceston Mechanics' Institute, in Cameron Street, circa 1867. Photo: William Cawston, Archives Office of Tasmania, Libraries Tasmania's Online collection, <https://stors.tas.gov.au/PH30-1-5>



PLATE 10 – W.H. Carpenter, *Launceston Museum*, c. 1887, pen and ink and watercolour on paper. The drawing shows the original collection in the then new annexe to the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, and glass cases purchased from the Royal Society; some of them had been in Lady Franklin's Museum. Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

Victoria Art Gallery at Royal Park. Duncan's design for the Albert Hall, built in 1890 for what became the Tasmanian International Exhibition of the following years, had been awarded a premium in the competition for that building, and his name appears on the foundation stone, although at least two other architects were involved in the final design. As the hall usurped the site of the venerable Launceston Horticultural Society's pavilion, that Society was given a permanent right to occupy part of it after the Exhibition closed. The hall was named after Albert, Queen Victoria's Prince Consort, begetter of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, so the Launceston Museum and Art Gallery was named after the Queen. As 'Victoria Museum' invited confusion with institutions in the successful daughter colony across Bass Strait, it was soon renamed the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (pl. 11). After his two early successes, John Duncan was lost to architecture, entering the world of business through a family firm; he died while General Manager of the Launceston Bank for Savings in 1936 (Ratcliff 2017).

The collections of the former RST Northern Branch, held by the Mechanics' Institute, came into the hands of the Launceston Municipal Council, and formed the nucleus of the collections of the new Museum and Art Gallery.

In 1910, a building for the Launceston Technical College was added in matching style to the original Museum and Art Gallery with the clear intention that it would eventually be occupied by that institution, as indeed it was from 1927 (Proverbs 1988, pp. 30–32). There was a large room on the ground floor with its own outside entrance, and that became the venue for meetings of the Northern Branch, as well as housing the libraries of the Museum and the Branch itself. A purpose-built lecture hall was later added at Royal Park, again with a separate entrance so that it could be used when the Museum was closed; although well-appointed, heavy rain on its roof could render a speaker's words inaudible. New meeting spaces were provided at the Inveresk campus of the Museum and Art Gallery, created within the former Launceston Railway Workshops complex and opened in 2001. A succession of curators and directors who served as secretaries to the Northern Branch had welded the association between the Society and the Museum, which is a proud protectorate of the Launceston City Council. The formal link with the City and the institution continues.

CONCLUSION

In the brief but instructive evolution of British architecture in Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania, some of the buildings discussed in this paper represent particularly interesting transitions in taste and fashion. Lady Franklin's museum is a rare antipodean representative of what James Stevens Curl prefers to call the 'Doric Revival', as it differentiates so clearly from other varieties of Neoclassicism (Curl 1993, pp. 74–76). The Royal Society of Tasmania's first foray into building, within the Botanical Gardens, appears to have been in an indeterminate Regency style that partook of both the

Gothick and the Georgian style. The building that became Parliament House confounds Georgian with Doric Revival. The Macquarie Street mansion that housed the Society's first public museum was in an advanced transitional style peculiar to Glasgow, built at a time when most colonial buildings were still Regency descendants of the Georgian hegemony. The Tasmanian Museum is a chaste herald of the Victorian Italianate that came to dominate architecture throughout Australia. The Victoria Museum in Launceston represented its more florid High Victorian development, and the former Custom House in Hobart, where the Royal Society of Tasmania currently meets, its Edwardian death-throes.

The Lady Franklin museum is recognised as one of the most important representatives of its style in Australasia, while the Secretary's Cottage still stands in Tasmania's Royal Botanical Gardens, its origin apparently forgotten. The Royal Society's Tasmanian Museum influenced the development of the civic precinct in which it stands and set a standard for the further housing of the major public institution that occupies it today. The choice of site has led to the inclusion of buildings that date from the earliest decades of British settlement to the late twentieth century, and has ensured the preservation and use of a number of historic structures despite the restrictions this imposes on its future growth. The anticipated electoral effect of the transfer of its ownership to the State converged with the need to house a collection that had its origin in that of a former branch of the Society, and resulted in the foundation of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art gallery in Launceston.

REFERENCES

- Allport, C. L.** undated: *Lady Franklin's Museum*, (either 1860–1888, or after 1922), watercolour on card, 22 x 29 cm. by Curzona ('Lily') Allport 1860–1949 (Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart).
- Blackburn, J.** 1840: Drawings for a new Government House, tabled in the Legislative Council, 15 August 1840. [TA 290/31].
- Bolger, P.** 1973: *Hobart Town*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, pl. 10 (anonymous photograph, undated, State Library collection).
- Boyes, G.T.W.** 1843: Diary, 26 October 1843. (Royal Society of Tasmania collection, University of Tasmania, RS 25/2(7)).
- Burns, T.E. & Skemp, J.R.** 1961: *Van Diemen's Land Correspondents: Letters from R. C. Gunn, R. W. Lawrence, Jorgen Jorgenson, Sir John Franklin and others to Sir William Hooker, 1827–1849*. Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston: 142 pp.
- Casey, L.** 1843: *Ancanthe Museum, Lenah Valley*, c. 1843, sepia and blue wash on paper, scraped highlights, 19.02 x 15.05 cm. by Loetitia Casey c. 1819–1863 (Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston).
- Craig, C.C.** 1961: *The Engravers of Van Diemen's Land*, Launceston. Tasmanian Historical Research Association: 172 pp. (11 pp. citing Lady Franklin's diary 11 March 1842).
- Curl, J.S.** 1993: *Georgian Architecture*. David & Charles Publishers, Newton Abbott, UK: 224 pp.
- Franklin, E.** 1842: Eleanor Franklin to Captain James Clark Ross, 7 April 1842. In Owen, R., *The Fate of Franklin*. Melbourne, Hutchinson 1978: 196 pp.
- Franklin, J.** 1838: Jane Franklin to Mary Simpkinson, quoted in Woodward, F.J. 1951: *Portrait of Jane: A life of Lady Franklin*, London, Hodder & Stoughton: 223–225.
- Franklin, J.** 1840: Jane Franklin to Mary Simpkinson, 4 September 1840. Mackaness, G. (ed): *Some Private Correspondence of*



PLATE 11 – (copies of the drawings held in the National Archives of Australia are displayed within the building, pl.8). Photo: Libraries Tasmania's Online collection, <https://stors.tas.gov.au/LPIC22-1-53>

- Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin (Tasmania 1837–1845). Part I, Sydney 1977: 102 pp.*
- Franklin, J.** 1841: Jane Franklin to Mary Simpkinson, 21 February 1841. In Hudspeth, W.H. 1949: *Souvenir, Lady Franklin Museum, Hobart*. Art Society of Tasmania, Hobart: n.p.
- Freeman, P.** 2016: *Municipal Magnificence: The Hobart Town Hall 1866–2016*. Hobart City Council, Hobart: 48 pp.
- Hardy Wilson, W.** 1924: *Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania*. National Trust of Australia NSW, Sydney, plate XXIV.
- Hunter, H.** 1886: *Rough Sketch, Museum and Temporary Art Gallery, Argyle Street*. (TMAG R1993.3.905)
- Hurburgh, M.** 1986: *The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens 1818–1986: A history in stone, soil and superintendents*. Shearwater Press, Hobart: 88 pp.
- McKay, P.T. & Pickup, E.** 1973: *The Parliament of Tasmania 1856–1973*, Hobart, by authority: B. G. Murphy, Clerk of the House of Assembly: 9 pp.
- Owen, R.** 1978: *The Fate of Franklin*. Hutchinson, London: 197 pp.
- Parliament of Tasmania** 1885: *An Act to incorporate and endow the Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens (49 VIC, No 34)*. (Access: http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/num_act/aataietmabg49vn34664/)
- Petrow, S.** 1998: *Going to the Mechanics: A history of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842–1914*. Historical Survey of Northern Tasmania, Launceston: 216 pp.
- Piesse, E.L.** 1913: The foundation and early work of the society; with some account of earlier institutions and societies in Tasmania. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*: 117–174.
- Prout, J.S.** 1844: *Ancanthe (Lady Franklin's Museum Nr Hobarton VDL)*, 1844, pencil, watercolour and Chinese white on paper, 26.3 x 18.2 cm., by John Skinner Prout 1805–1876. (Royal Society of Tasmania collection, the gift of the Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge, held at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart).
- Proverbs, B.** 1988: *From the Beginning: A history of the Launceston Technical College 1888–1988*. Launceston College of TAFE: 48 pp.
- Ratcliff, E.** 2017: 'Victoria, Albert and the Likely Lad' in QV Magazine Edition 3. Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston: 39 pp.
- Ross, L.** 2021: Resurrection: the creation history of the Royal Society of Tasmania's Northern Branch. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 155(1): 1–7.
- Royal Society of Tasmania** 1845: First Annual Report, May 1845. Cited in Piesse 1913: 145.
- Shelton, B., Cripps, P. & Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery** 1982: *Henry Hunter, architect, Hobart Town*. Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart: 16 pp.
- Smith, R.S.** 1962: *John Lee Archer: Tasmanian architect and engineer*, Launceston. Tasmanian Historical Research Association: 24 pp.
- Smith, R.W.** 1893: *Official Record of the Tasmanian International Exhibition, held at Launceston 1891–92*. Launceston Examiner: 15 pp.
- Stilwell, G.T.** 1971: Administrative Complex, Hobart. In *Australian Council of National Trusts 1971: Historic Public Buildings of Australia*. Cassell Australia: 36 pp.
- Stoney, H.B.** 1856: *A Residence in Tasmania: With a descriptive*

tour through the island, from Macquarie Harbour to Circular Head. Smith Elder & Co., London: 312 pp.

Ward, M. 2006: *Built by Seabrook: Hobart buildings constructed by the Seabrook Family from the 1830s.* The Author, Hobart: 42 pp. (citing RST Archives).

Woodward, F.J. 1951: *Portrait of Jane: A Life of Lady Franklin.* Hodder & Stoughton, London: 226 pp.

Young, D. 1998: The Role of the National Trust in the Conservation of Hobart Buildings in the 1960s. In Terry, I. & Evans, K. (eds) 1997: *Hobart's History: The first two hundred years.* Conference Proceedings Professional Historians Association of Tasmania, 4 October 1997: 7 pp.

(accepted 24 August 2021)